

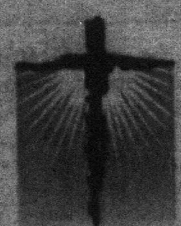
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# Record

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MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

## Hammond out, Harris named interim

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP and local reports) — Geoff Hammond and three of his closest associates resigned their positions with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) after trustees met more than seven hours in executive session on August 11 at the Southern Baptist mission agency's Alpharetta, Ga., headquarters.

The three staff members who also resigned were Dennis Culbreth, senior assistant to the president; Steve Reid, senior associate to the president for strategy development; and Brandon Pickett, communications team leader.

Their resignations came after 54 of the board's 57 trustees met in an all-day closed session. Four of the 54 trustees participated by conference call.

Until the announcement of the resignations, there was no word from trustees throughout the day about either the substance of their discussions or their progress toward a resolution.

In a statement delivered to the media at 7:33 p.m. eastern time, trustee chairman Tim Patterson said, "First I want to thank the trustees of the North American Mission Board who have come together today and worked through some very difficult issues. They have carried out their responsibilities today in a way that has been honorable, thorough and fair."

"Dr. Hammond has resigned as president of the North American Mission

Board and his resignation takes effect immediately. In addition, three of Dr. Hammond's closest associates — Steve Reid, Dennis Culbreth, and Brandon

Pickett — will resign their positions as well.

"Even though the subject of today's meeting has been the topic of much media speculation, it is important to remember that this is a personnel matter and we will keep the details of today's discussion confidential."

"As you can imagine, these last few days have been very challenging for Dr.



Hammond

Hammond and his family, our trustees and the employees and missionaries of the North American Mission Board. We will continue to be in prayer for Dr. Hammond, his family, and for the families of the others who have resigned.

"I want to thank Southern Baptists for their prayers and ask that they continue praying. We have much work left to do as we seek God's guidance in these days. I still believe that God has great plans for the North American Mission Board and that NAMB will play a key part in the Southern Baptist effort to reach North America for Christ."

Patterson added that he would not have any further comments Tuesday evening but promised more information would be shared "very soon."

The meeting initially was to involve only members of NAMB's executive committee — a smaller group within the board of trustees — but members of the whole board learned about the meeting's agenda and succeeded in calling for a meeting of the full board.

The son and grandson of missionaries, Hammond, before taking over as president, served as a NAMB church planting missionary with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) convention. He also served as senior associate director of the SBCV.

He was elected president by a unanimous vote of the

NAMB board in March 2007 following a nine-month search to replace the previous president, Robert E. Reccord, who resigned as president in April 2006, citing "honest philosophical and methodological differences."

During Reccord's tenure, there were questions raised about leadership style, employee morale, extended absences from his office, and lavish spending — including a trip to London for a movie premiere.

All three of the associates who resigned had close working relationships with Hammond before he became NAMB president.

Reid and Pickett were on staff with Hammond at SBCV.



Harris

Culbreth was a pastor in Chesapeake, Va., a NAMB trustee, and member of the search committee that brought Hammond to the mission board.

The board meeting comes at a time when NAMB is embarking on an ambitious partnership with state conventions and local associations to see every SBC church, by 2020, planting other churches. The evangelical initiative is called God's Plan for Sharing (GPS).

Meanwhile, NAMB staff gathered for the board-wide meeting on August 12 to hear directly from Patterson.

Several trustees attended the meeting including Tim Dowdy, pastor of Eagle's Landing First Church in McDonough, Ga., who serves as the board's vice chairman, and Mike Palmer, pastor of Salmon Valley Church in Salmon, Idaho, the board's second vice chairman.

Patterson, pastor of Hillcrest Church in Jacksonville, Fla., expressed appreciation to the staff and reaffirmed the importance of their contribution to NAMB's ministry.

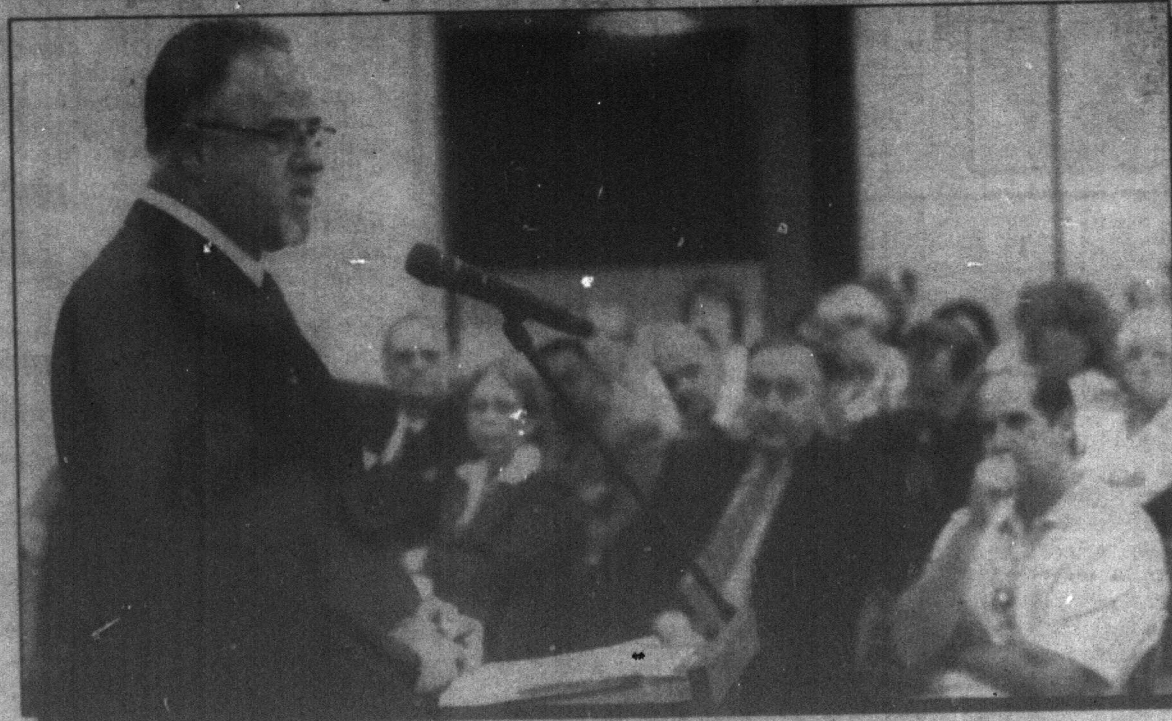
"We want you to know that we love you guys, every one of you," Patterson said, "everyone who works here, who gives your heart and time here — and has the calling of God on your lives. God has placed you here as surely as God has placed me as pastor of a church."

By noon that day, Patterson had emailed the staff announcing that Richard Harris, who has nearly 30 years of combined service at NAMB and its predecessor, the Home Mission Board (HMB), will serve as the entity's acting interim president until an interim president is chosen. No timetable was mentioned.

Harris' previous service includes 10 years as NAMB's vice president of church planting and 16 years leading HMB's mass evangelism efforts.

"The North American Mission Board is one of most vital agencies in the world today," Patterson said. "We will continue on. We have been tasked by Southern Baptists to reach North America for Christ."

That is our goal and our job. And until Jesus comes back, that's what we're going to do."



STAFF MEETING — Tim Patterson, trustee chairman of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), addresses staff of the Southern Baptist missions agency on August 12, a day after a special called trustee meeting ended with the resignation of NAMB President Geoff Hammond and three of his closest associates. Patterson assured the staffers that the agency will "continue on." (BP photo)





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# Loose lips really will sink this ship

**D**isasters have struck once again in distant reaches of the globe, creating scared and hungry victims who have no idea what the future holds.

Southern Baptists — and Mississippi Baptists — will be there. They won't be featured in the headlines or spotlighted on the nightly television news, but they are there. In areas where they had to keep their heads down even before the disaster, they are hard at work to coordinate the Southern Baptist response.

Teams of trained Southern Baptist disaster relief workers are gearing up for the long-term recovery effort, Mississippi Baptists included. They will be working closely with those Southern Baptist personnel on the scene to get into areas where no Christian has trod in generations. There are at least three ever-present dangers all of them face that should keep us on our knees in prayer around the clock:

- Many of the areas in the path of the disasters are overwhelmingly Muslim, and more than a few have been locked in civil war for many years with Islamic extremists. All relief workers, and especially those from religious organizations, could be targeted by terrorists.

- Career Southern Baptist personnel in these areas risk exposure, expulsion, or worse if their profiles get too elevated during this crisis.

- Southern Baptist volunteers could be denied admittance to any of the countries affected by the disasters. Many borders have already been closed to outsiders, and scrutiny of incoming relief workers continues to increase with each passing week.

We need to understand that Christians are not welcome in many of these countries. As a television commentator put it,



**SEARCH FOR THE MISSING** — Indonesians, attempting to protect their health with second-hand gloves and makeshift breathing filters, dig through a massive pile of rubble to recover one of the countless corpses in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after the devastating 2005 tsunami roared ashore there. A massive response was undertaken by Southern Baptists, including a number of Mississippi Baptists who were able to go into areas where Christians had not been in many years. (BP photo)

"Some of these governments would rather see their children starve before they accept a crumb of bread from the wrong groups." Those "wrong" groups include Christians.

The saying, "Loose lips sink ships," was used extensively in World War II, and it means that information from people who talked about which troops were shipping out and where they were going could result in the enemy acquiring the information and thus being able to sink a shipload of soldiers before they reached a faraway battlefield.

Loose lips can also sink our Southern Baptist disaster relief efforts. At a time when Christians are at risk all over the world, we must be very careful in what we

say or write about the relief effort. For example, neither The Baptist Record nor the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board website will identify the countries or specific areas into which volunteers will be traveling when doing so could jeopardize their safety or the success of their mission.

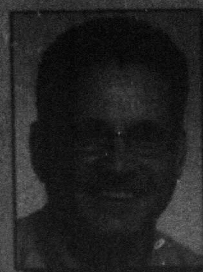
Church and association newsletters, bulletins, websites — especially websites — and other publications should be cautious, too.

The Baptist Record will keep Mississippi Baptists informed of the relief effort, but with an elevated awareness of what's at stake to help guard the safety and security of the many determined and dedicated workers and volunteers.

## GUEST OPINION:

### Start SS year with a bang

By David Francis  
LifeWay Christian Resources



**F**illed with the screams of enthusiastic fans, thudding pads of eager players, flips of energetic cheerleaders, and fight songs from battling bands. In churches far and wide, this time of year is also marked by the kickoff of a new "season" of Sunday School. Here are some tips for giving your Sunday School season a great opening kickoff:

- **Conduct a Sunday School Kickoff event.** Do you remember Sunday School Launch Weeks? Well, Sunday School Kickoff is just a fresh name for the same idea. Need some tips? Check out the free download of the book, *The Five Step Formula for Sunday School Growth* (available on LifeWay's website through <http://tinyurl.com/mzk5df>).

- **You'll find ideas for a great event at the end of the book.** Feel free to reproduce the book and consider including it in a worker's notebook, adding additional material or creating your own cover.

- **Have a Sunday School faculty commissioning service.** This can be an entire service during which you read names and places of service for each Sunday School director and teacher, or it

can be a group recognition as part of your morning worship service. As a minimum, you could ask faculty to come to the front or stand while the pastor leads a prayer of dedication.

A nice touch would be an insert in the bulletin that lists each leader by department or class, beginning with babies and going through senior adults. This insert can also draw attention to vacancies should you want to advertise that service opportunity.

- **Identify and assign all associate members to an adult department or class.** The new Sunday School year is the best time to make sure every worker in the preschool, children and student divisions is

assigned to an adult group. If you've had good intentions to do this in the past, but just haven't gotten around to it, this is the time to get it done.

Every adult group should receive a list of the associate members assigned to it. These members-in-service should be assigned to the very best group leader(s) in each class. Mount a poster in the adult classroom with the names of associate members and where they serve; digital cameras make it easy to add photos.

- **Schedule a party for every adult group.** Every adult department or class should schedule a party the first month of your new Sunday School year. Be sure to invite your associate

members. Make a special effort to call every member and recent visitor on the roll.

- **Provide nametags.** Decide on a random fact (hometown, favorite sports team, year they joined the church, hobby, etc.) to ask people to write, along with their names, on the tag. Change the random fact at each future party. You'll be surprised at the connections people make with one another.

- **Distribute Sunday School literature to inactive and prospective members.** This is a great excuse to make an at-the-door visit to inactive members and visitors. Just let them know you're starting a new year and introduce them to the material you're studying. Invite them to be a part of the group; you may be amazed at the results.

The bottom line: Don't let this kickoff season pass you by. There are excellent opportunities at the start of the Sunday School year to get the season off to a great start.

Francis is director of Sunday School at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Nashville. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.



# Extremists killing, persecuting Christians

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Four more Christians have been beheaded in Somalia, according to the Washington-based human rights organization International Christian Concern (ICC).

The four Christians had been working for a non-governmental organization that aids orphans in southern Somalia. The Islamic extremist group al Shabaab, which has ties to al-Qaida, "kidnapped and eventually beheaded the Christians after they refused to renounce their faith," ICC reported on August 11.

According to the ICC report: "On August 4, a junior [al Shabaab] militant notified all the families of the victims that the four Christians had been beheaded for apostasy. He described the Christians as promoters of 'fitna,' a Muslim term for religious discord. The militant, who called himself 'Seiful Islam' ('the Sword of Islam'), told the families that the bodies will not be given to them 'as Somalia does not have cemeteries for infidels.'"

"One eyewitness account said, 'All the four apostates were given an opportunity to return to Islam to be released but they all declined the generous offer.'"

Earlier this year, seven other Somalis were beheaded, along with two sons of a village church leader. According to Compass Direct News, a California-based organization that also reports on incidents of persecution:

• The seven Somalis were publicly beheaded July 10 in the town of Bladua for being deemed "Christians" and "spies" by al Shabaab (which means "the Youth" in Arabic).

• The two sons of a church leader were beheaded Feb. 21. Their father, Musa Mohammed Yusuf, 55, formerly led an underground church in the village of Yonday. He and his wife and a third son subsequently took refuge in Kenya.

Somalia's Christians comprise less than one percent of the African nation's 9.8 million people.

After the seven beheadings, the Associated Press noted, "Punishments such as stoning, amputations and beheadings are historically rare in Somalia, which traditionally practices moderate Sufi Islam. But a more extremist form of jihadi Salafist Islam with its roots in Saudi Arabia has taken root during the chaotic warfare of recent years, strengthened by a recent influx of hundreds of foreign fighters."

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) urged Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to address the issue of religious freedom when she met with Somali President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed in Nairobi during her recent trip to Africa.

Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention based in Nashville, is a member of the USCIRF panel.

Meanwhile, twelve Christians including three pastors were killed and 20 churches were demolished in Nigeria amid escalating religiously motivated violence, prompting a call for government intervention.

Conflicts between Christians and Muslims have gone largely unchecked by the Nigerian government, and USCIRF this year placed the African nation on its list of "countries of particular concern."

In a report on August 6, ICC said the attacks that occurred July 26 in Maiduguri were instigated by Boko Haram, a group that opposes Western education and fights to impose sharia law throughout Nigeria, including areas that are largely Christian.

Sabo Yakubu, a husband, father of seven, and pastor of a Church of Christ congregation, was hacked to death by a machete, ICC said. Also killed were Sylvester Akpan, pastor of National Evangelical Mission, and George Orji, pastor of Good News of Christ Church.

"Mohammed Yusuf, the Islamic sect leader who initially said their targets were government property and security agencies, later changed and started setting ablaze churches and killing pastors who had nothing to do with their activities," Yuguda Zubagai Ndurvuwa, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, said in a statement reported by ICC.

In the fighting, 700 people including police, Islamic militants, and civilians were killed. In the city of Potiskum, Islamists attacked First Baptist Church and Church of the Brethren, burning musical instruments and sound systems before being chased away by police, ICC said.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, has been on USCIRF's watch list since 1992 because of a significant pattern of restrictions on religious freedom. Since 1999, more than 10,000 Nigerians reportedly have been killed in "sectarian and communal attacks and reprisals between Muslims and Christians," USCIRF said.

Local groups have clashed over issues steeped in tribal identity, religion, and land.

"The response of the government to such violence, particularly bringing perpetrators to justice, continues to remain inadequate," the commission said.

Last fall, at least 12 Nigerian Baptists were killed and five Baptist churches were burned during riots sparked by local election results in Jos, Nigeria.



**VIOLENT TERRITORY** — In this Baptist Press file photo, Clint and Harriet Bowman talk with the registrar and the director of academic affairs for the Baptist Pastor's School in Jos, Nigeria. Jos has been the scene in recent months of escalating violence, including the brutal murders of several Christians and the destruction of Christian churches. (BP photo)

Southern Baptist International Mission Board workers in the area worked alongside several Nigerian Baptist congregations to comfort and house victims of the violence.

More than 300 people were reported killed and thousands were injured in the riots while dozens of churches, mosques, businesses and homes were burned. At least 10,000 people were displaced because of several days of violence in Jos, which is located between Nigeria's largely Christian south and Muslim north, USCIRF said.

"One Baptist church lost five members and one deacon. At least one pastor's home was burned down. It was a very, very sad day," a local Baptist pastor said in a report released by the IMB in December.

In March and April, a USCIRF delegation traveled to Nigeria to assess religious freedom conditions and expressed concern over the expansion of sharia law into the criminal codes of several northern Nigeria states.

Since October 1999, 12 northern Nigerian states have expanded or announced plans to expand the application of sharia law in their states' criminal law, USCIRF said.

Punishments include amputation, flogging, or death by stoning, often after trials that fall short of basic international legal standards. Women have faced particular discrimination under the sharia codes, USCIRF said, and Christians in the northern states have complained of being viewed as second-class citizens.

"In addition, there continue to be reports of foreign sources of funding and support for Islamist extremist activities in northern Nigeria, activities that threaten to fracture the already fragile relations between the two main religious groups," USCIRF said.

Despite evidence of mistreatment, the Nigerian government has done little to address sectarian and communal violence, including no serious efforts to investigate or prosecute perpetrators.

"There are reports of specific instances of failures to heed warning signs of violence on the part of various government leaders, and failures on the part of federal police to respond effectively and appropriately — at times, if at all — to violence once it has erupted," USCIRF said.

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

Paul D. Scott, Jr., pastor of Oak Hill Church, Poplarville, and his wife Shelly Blount Scott join the ranks of more than 4,700 International Mission Board workers sharing Christ in 126 countries and among 336 ethnic people groups. The Scotts will serve in Venezuela.

### 20 years ago

Monroe Association breaks ground on a new office building. The floor plan calls for 3,246 square feet to house a media library, offices, conference rooms, reception area, and a meeting room for up to 100 people. Rick Spencer is director of missions.

### 50 years ago

Undesignated gifts for Southern Baptist Convention causes amount to \$1,414,352 during July, bringing the years totals to \$9,743,093, a 9.31% increase over the first seven months of the previous year.



## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



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By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
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RPQKQRRQDMG LMH:  
GQO

Clue: E=C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Colossians One: Twenty-one

## A REMARKABLE CONTRAST

Sometimes senior adults are characterized by the attitudes and actions of some folks who have lived long enough to get in that category. Usually it is the bad traits by which we pick out and characterize an aging person as though all persons of that age are the same, and that is not true. That is no more right than to characterize all teenagers as bad because some of them do wild or outlandish things or act in an irresponsible manner. Not all teenagers are that way, and usually the ones who do those things do not always act that way. Whether youth, senior adults, or those in between, you will more than likely find a variety of folks in every age group who seem to live with and nurture a bad attitude. There will be others who seem to have the kind of buoyant, encouraging spirit that makes a difference for anybody who gets close enough to be touched by them.

Some time ago I had the privilege of being in one of our churches for a special weekend event. It was a special period of services, activities, fellowship, and worship times that were magnificent. I preached in four services over the weekend, including Sunday morning. I was amazed at the wonderful spirit of the church and even more impressed with the full range of folks who were there. There were children, a large youth contingency, moms and dads, and senior adults sprinkled all over the room.

On Sunday morning between the Sunday School time and worship service, I was visiting with folks, shaking

hands with people, and meeting some of the people who had not been there for the previous services. As we were standing at the entryway into the church, some senior adults were looking for the church bulletin. Well, they had not prepared a church bulletin because of the special events of the weekend, and the guest worship leader was going to be providing a little bit different approach at this service. That did not set well with several of the older folks. Not only were they upset because there was no bulletin, they were determined to make sure that everybody else got upset because there was no church bulletin. They were incensed that they did not get a bulletin when they came in the door, and they became rather rude in finding anybody within range on which to unload their feelings. I was just a visiting preacher that morning and had absolutely nothing to do with the preparations that were made or the decision that had been made not to have a bulletin. Still, I was close enough to be targeted and heard some of their cutting remarks and unkind critiques.

In a matter of minutes, they made their way into the sanctuary to find others to infect and affect with their feelings. Personally, I did not feel that I should get involved in the trauma that they were experiencing, but I wanted to point out to them that bulletins are not found anywhere in Scripture.

## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Maybe the only scriptural violation that was taking place was not the absence of a worship guide, but the presence of a contentious and ill spirit. I later thanked God for helping me to keep my mouth shut.

That night at the close of the evening service, I was visiting with people as they were leaving, and one precious lady with a walking cane came by and was so sweet and thoughtful in her remarks to me. I said to her, "I believe that you have been here at every service." She said, "I would not have missed it. It has been wonderful." Some of the folks standing around her said, "Not only did she come to the worship services, but she went out with the mission team yesterday morning and spent all morning going to the nursing home and visiting with the folks there." Then they told me that she was 86 years old. With the help of a walking cane and a spirit that could not be repressed by any of the circumstances of her life, she was going to get out and bless others.

I began to think about what a contrast there was in people of the same age group. Some would have their spirit warped simply because of the absence of a piece of paper that they usually received when they went into the service. Another person was an agent to change attitudes, lift spirits, and bless folks. It was a reminder to me that no age group should be characterized by good or bad attitudes but by the individual's

response to do what the Lord would have them to do and to surrender to His lordship in whatever may be taking place in the setting around them.

I am so thankful that the Lord let me live long enough to learn that some of the senior adults that I have met who were living out their days cranky, criticizing, and complaining about everything that was going on were doing the same thing with the same spirit when they were in their 30's and 40's. The flipside of that is rather glorious. I have had the privilege of seeing folks grow into their twilight years smiling, blessing others, and doing what they can with a sweet Christlike spirit. I remember that they were doing the same things when they were in their energetic, younger years.

While there are people who are doing studies about generational characteristics and inter-generational tensions, I would offer this one small piece of advice: Take note that there are outstanding young people serving Jesus with a commitment and an unbridled passion in the midst of an age that many believe have forgotten God. Likewise, there are tremendous stalwart senior saints who continue to live with an exuberance to serve Jesus and continue making a difference in their world while others of their age group may appear to be self-centered and grumpy. May each of us in every age live in the good graces of Jesus that will transform us from wanting a blessing to being a blessing!

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## STAFF CHANGES

1. **Harperville Church, Harperville**, has called Bobby McKay as pastor effective Aug. 2. He previously served as pastor of Oak Vale Church, Oak Vale.
2. **Macedonia Church, Petal**, has called Brett Sutherland as music minister. He is a 2009 graduate of William Carey University.

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**HARMONY BAPTIST CHURCH,** Winston County, seeks resumes for part-time youth minister position. Mail resumes to Harmony Baptist Church, 320 Harmony Baptist Church Rd., Louisville, MS 39339. Email [jerry-lundy@bellsouth.net](mailto:jerry-lundy@bellsouth.net), or call (662) 773-9507, 773-7521, or 803-3381.

**SEEKING PART-TIME MINISTER OF** Music at Looxahoma Baptist Church (seven miles East of Senatobia, MS). Candidates need to be able to read music, and lead a blended style of worship. Send resumes to [Looxahomaba1036@bellsouth.net](mailto:Looxahomaba1036@bellsouth.net), or LBC, CAO Music Minister Search Team, 808 Lyles Road, Senatobia, MS 38668.

**FBC, PLANTERSVILLE IS SEEKING A** part-time or bi-vocational Director of Youth Ministries. Send resumes to P.O. Box 487, Plantersville, MS 38862 or [firstbaptist800@comcast.net](mailto:firstbaptist800@comcast.net).

**NORTH COLUMBIA BAPTIST** Church, Columbia, seeking a fulltime minister of music/education, email resume to [ncbc1@hotmail.com](mailto:ncbc1@hotmail.com) or mail to North Columbia Baptist Church, P.O. Box 271, Columbia, MS 39429.

**PELAHATCHIE BAPTIST CHURCH** is seeking a part-time minister of music for worship services and adult choir. Please forward resume to the PBC search committee, attention: Due McKinion, P.O. Box 876, Pelahatchie, MS 39145, email [due@rankincountry.org](mailto:due@rankincountry.org).

**FBC, HORN LAKE, MISS., IS SEEKING** resumes for a senior pastor, no later than August 31, 2009. Please mail to 3505 Goodman Road, Horn Lake, MS 38637.



# Practical Principles for Christian Living

## Is There A Doctor In The House?

By Jimmy Preter  
Miss. Baptist Christian Action Commission

H.R. 3200, a massive health care reform bill, is being debated in Congress and in all other media outlets. Most everyone agrees that health care reform is needed because of the numbers uninsured along with spiraling costs. But the current proposal raises as many questions and fears as it provides answers and solutions. What does H.R. 3200 say about availability of quality health care, doctor-patient relationships, abortion, end of life issues, single payer plan, and costs in additional taxes?

The Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission has published an analysis of the most distressing aspects of the bill. They arrange their comments under three headings: Sanctity of Human Life, Increased Costs and Taxes, and Increased Bureaucracy and Intrusiveness. Their summation is "any one of these three areas is enough to garner opposition. When combined, they lead to the unavoidable conclusion that H.R. 3200 is extremely dangerous legislation to the health and well-being of most Americans." You can read the entire article at [http://www.christianaction.com/blog/comments/analysis\\_of\\_health\\_care\\_reform\\_bill](http://www.christianaction.com/blog/comments/analysis_of_health_care_reform_bill)

Recently the Christian Action Commission asked our two Senators and four Representatives for a brief summary of their views on this bill. These are some of their comments.

**Senator Thad Cochran:** "The current health care system in the United States needs reform. Health care costs are too high, individuals are worried about how they will afford insurance, and the system focuses on treating patients when they are sick instead of keeping them healthy. We should not reform health care in a way that will lead to restricted access to doctors and health care choices. Legislation that creates or could lead to a single payer system will not improve our health care. If we expand Medicaid, Medicare, or create a new government-run insurance option, the result will be government involvement in the doctor-patient relationship. Denial of innovative treatments and cures would be commonplace. This is not patient-centered health reform and I won't support it."

**Senator Roger Wicker:** "While we have a great opportunity to implement positive reforms, we also stand to lose greatly if we take the wrong approach. Many details are yet to be unveiled, but it is apparent they will come with more debt, higher taxes,

and lost jobs. The president should call on congressional leadership to go back to the drawing board and write a bipartisan and targeted bill that makes health care more portable, more affordable, and more accessible for all Americans."

**Representative Travis Childers:** "While I do not support H.R. 3200 as it is currently written, I hope the House of Representatives can ultimately craft a health care reform bill that focuses on lowering costs for hard-working families, allows people to keep their current plan and doctor, and increases competition in the marketplace. As a Southern Baptist, I can only support a bill that does not include federal funding for abortions. It is also essential that health care reform legislation be drafted in a bipartisan, fiscally responsible manner. During today's tough economic times especially, we have to balance the need to reform our health care system with the need to practice fiscal discipline."

**Representative Gregg Harper:** "We do not need the government takeover bill that is being proposed by the Obama Administration. I believe we can find common ground and real solutions to make health care more accessible and

affordable, without the government controlling the system."

**Representative Gene Taylor:** "I am opposed to the current health care reform bills being debated in Congress. We cannot add an expensive new subsidized health care program on top of the huge current debt that is \$11 trillion and growing rapidly. H.R. 3200 is currently under consideration by House committees. Some changes are being negotiated, but I do not believe it can pass Congress without substantial changes."

**Representative Bennie Thompson:** Mr. Thompson was contacted by us August 6th at 1:23 P.M. His staff stated that he had no statement regarding the bill. He was still reviewing it. One must assume he is still reviewing it since there has been no further response. You can contact his office at (202)-225-5876 to see if he has come to any conclusions.

When legislative bills are placed on the fast track and the supporters of such bills begin to attack those who oppose them, it is often the result of weak and flawed legislation. H.R. 3200 is such a bill. The President was rushing it and now his administration and colleagues are bashing those who disagree with the content of the bill. "Is there a doctor in the house?" Stay tuned!!

## GCR Task Force holds first meeting; chairman issues statement

ATLANTA (BP) — The first meeting of the task force charged with helping spark a "Great Commission resurgence" among Southern Baptists held its first meeting August 11-12 in Atlanta.

Task Force Chairman Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, Ar., opened a noontime press conference immediately following the close of the August 12 session by reading a prepared statement.

"We began with an extended period of prayer, then immediately got busy with the job that Southern Baptists had assigned to us," Floyd said. "We talked to each other. We talked seriously. Honest talk. But we were able to do that within a context of Christian kindness and friendship. I am thankful that we are already talking about these issues and looking at big questions. This is how I hoped we would begin."

Analyzing the challenges facing Southern Baptists and suggesting a course of action that will foster greater effectiveness and efficiency in taking the Gospel to — and making disciples of — all nations is a daunting task, said Floyd.

"I trust that all of us understand that we have a huge job to accomplish and a looming deadline before us," he said, continuing to read from the prepared statement.

"This much is already clear: Our great passion is the Great Commission. We yearn with all our hearts, every one of us, to see Southern Baptists be more faithful in taking the Gospel to all of the nations. It is our passion. We will work

long, hard and tirelessly to develop a report that will unleash a passion for the Great Commission, that will energize Southern Baptists and prioritize our work together. We are so highly honored by this task that has been entrusted to us."

Southern Baptist Convention President Johnny Hunt, who also participated in the press conference, said he felt the diverse 23-member task force made a good start on the kind of open dialogue needed to find a path forward for the 16.2-million-member convention of nearly 45,000 congregations.

"I am excited about the start. I feel like it was a very engaging time, a very challenging time. I feel like the longer we were together, the more open and honest we could be to share how we really felt," said Hunt, pastor of First Church, Woodstock, Ga., "not always what we wanted to hear, but what kept the conversation flowing and could lead to change."

"Change is difficult always, in our lives personally, in our church and in our denomination," Hunt added. "So even in our own committee to come together, lead for change that will bring positive change, as pertains to being more effective and more inclusive for the Great Commission, is quite a task but I think it's a great start."

Floyd said he is more convinced than ever of the need for great numbers of Southern Baptists to pray for the task force's efforts.

"We all leave today, I believe, with a great deal of hope, with a deep sense of burden on our hearts. We leave with more conviction than when we came that we must rally Southern Baptists by the thousands to pray for us

in this process, that we do our very best in all our churches to talk to them about that these are desperate times, not only in our convention but in our country and in our world," Floyd said.

"This is a great moment for God's people to rise up — and the greatest way we need to rise up is to be a people who are convicted to pray for one another, especially with this enormous task that we have before us."

Regardless of whether people are enthused about the committee's work, Floyd said he hoped they would visit the task force's [www.pray4gcr.com](http://www.pray4gcr.com) website and join more than 2,500 others in praying for what everyone can agree is a desperate need: a resurgence of passion for the Great Commission mandate.

"We want our people involved in the process. It doesn't really matter where they are in this perspective," Floyd said. "Every one of our churches needs a Great Commission resurgence, beginning with my church and I've told my church that and I'm preaching on that week after next, because we need that in our fellowship."



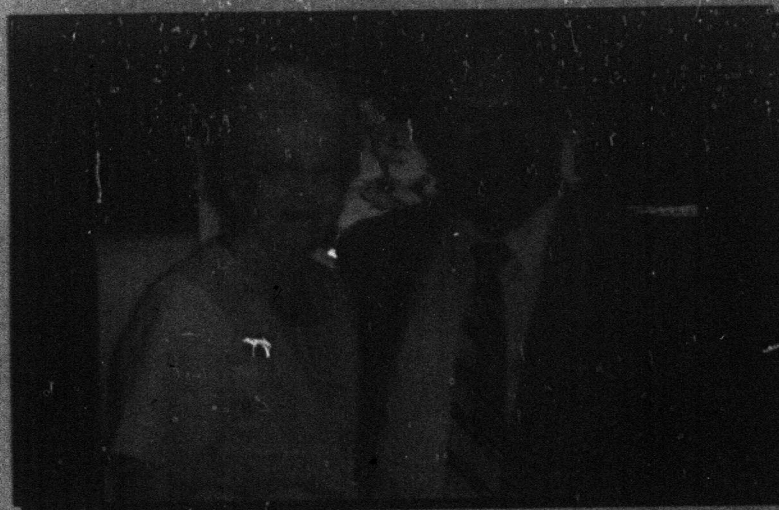
Floyd



Hunt



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Holloway and Purser



2. Smith and Anderson



3. Poplar Flat Church, Louisville, note-burning



4. Seal, Doggett, and Farris

1. Valley Park Church, Valley Park, honored Addie Mae Holloway Aug. 2 for 58 years of perfect attendance in Sunday School. Shown are Holloway and pastor Ronnie Purser.

2. Twin Lakes Church, Madison, recently licensed Charles Anderson to the ministry. Shown, left, is pastor Hugh Smith and Anderson.

3. Poplar Flat Church, Louisville, had a note-burning ceremony June 28 after paying off their new fellowship hall renovation and expansion in less than six months. Shown are Larry Cockrell, deacon chairman, and Bob Stubbs, chairman of the finance committee.

4. Holly Seal, a member of Macedonia Church, Petal, presented a picture she painted to Linda Sue Doggett, widow of former pastor Jerry Doggett. Shown are Seal, Doggett, and pastor Mark Farris.

5. The youth of North Morton Church, Morton, participated in a "Plunged to Poverty" event Aug. 6-9, staying in the yard of an abandoned house and discovering what it is like to live with no food, no air conditioning, no cell phones, no vanity, and only the clothes on their backs. They had to ask strangers for food. The group also handed out flyers in the community and held a Backyard Bible Study. Shown are the participants.

6. The J.A.M. children's ministry of First Church, Runnelstown, recently held a "beach jam" at Biloxi, during which the older children shared bottled water, tracts, and Jesus with beach goers. Shown are the participants.

7. Youth from Arkadelphia Church, Lauderdale Association, attended Centrifuge July 6-11 at Union University in Jackson, Tn. Pictured are participants.

8. Trinity Church, Pearl, conducted a prayer walk for schools Aug. 5, with over 40 people participating and five different schools visited. Shown are the participants.

9. Twenty-two members of Corinth Church, North Central Association, went on their first mission trip in the church's history. The church partnered with First Church, Long Beach, July 19 - 24, with one group hanging vinyl siding and completing a porch on a mission home in Waveland. Another group hung sheet rock in a residential home. Shown are the participants.



5. North Morton Church youth



6. First Church, Runnelstown



7. Centrifuge campers, Arkadelphia Church, Lauderdale Assoc.



8. Trinity Church, Pearl



9. Corinth Church, North Central Association

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## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



1. Gunter Road Church, Florence



2. Davidson

1. Gunter Road Church, Florence: June 14 - 17; enrollment, 64; average attendance, 58; shown are the participants.

2. Faith Church, West Point: attendance, 161, with 27 decisions; shown is church member Jimmy Davidson portraying an aborigine.

3. Bartahatchie Church, Caledonia: July 20 - 24; pastor Philip Lindsey allowed the children to paint him due to good attendance.

4. Pleasant Hill Church, Tippah County: Marsha McDowell, director. Shown are the participants.



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS



3. Lindsey



4. Pleasant Hill Church, Tippah County

## International breakfast world record attempt planned for Oct. 10

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Men's ministry is tough work. Just ask Dennis Herrera. After three years of working with men as a lay leader at Woodlake Church in San Antonio, Texas, Herrera knows it's often tough to get men together for anything — even for a good breakfast and prayer.

Last October 20, men showed up for a prayer breakfast at the small Southern Baptist church. It was one of the biggest breakfast turnouts of the year. Although Woodlake Church hosts a similar men's prayer breakfast every month, last October's was unique.

Not only was the meal modeled around a British breakfast — complete with British Bangers, a traditional kind of sausage — but they joined more than 3,000 other Baptist men around the world to eat, pray, and worship together in a first-time event called The Bigger Breakfast. The Baptist Men's Movement in the United Kingdom sponsored the event.

"I think the men seemed to be motivated to be a part of the event and add to the totals of the British men attending," Herrera said.

The Baptist Men's Movement had aimed to break the Guinness World Record for the largest breakfast, a record ironically held by a Texas group. They fell short, but this

year the Brits will have more help. Southern Baptist men in the United States and Canada, along with Nigerian Baptist men, will be joining them on October 10 for what could become the new world record.

Southern Baptists helping organize the convention's involvement have a bigger vision for the event's outcome than simply breaking a record. "The sleeping giants in Southern Baptist churches are our laymen," said Jim Burton, team leader for mission education at the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board in Alpharetta, Ga.

"The Bigger Breakfast is Southern Baptists' opportunity to gather our men and discover — or for many churches to rediscover — the synergy that can come from their focus on missions."

Burton says Southern Baptists will focus on mission action, both in their communities and beyond, during the breakfast. Held a day before the convention's World Hunger Day, Southern Baptist men will highlight the World Hunger Fund at the event. They are also being encouraged to invite their non-Christian friends to the breakfast and present the Gospel to them.

British Baptists started The Bigger Breakfast last year in an attempt to re-ignite spiritual

passion among the country's Baptist men. Phil Creighton, vice-president of the Baptist Men's Movement in the U.K., pointed to statistics that came out a few years ago from Tearfund suggesting there would be virtually no men in U.K. churches by 2028.

"That's a scary prospect," said Creighton, who first came up with The Bigger Breakfast idea last year. "Obviously, we need to do something about that. We need to show men that being a follower of Jesus Christ doesn't mean you're weak, but you can be an ordinary bloke and still follow Christ."

Creighton had seen the value of men's breakfasts in his own life. When he was a young Christian, those he met at men's breakfasts in his church became key mentors for him. In recent years, Creighton notes, the number of churches hosting men's breakfasts has dropped considerably.

With a year of experience in getting churches involved in The Bigger Breakfast around the U.K., Creighton has advice for churches as they try to reach non-Christians through the event. He encourages them to be creative when inviting non-Christians and to focus on "what you do well."

"Every church should focus on what their church does best," Creighton said. "The key to get-



ting non-Christians to an event like this is that they feel welcomed and wanted. If you're trying to do something with fireworks or an American football tournament and you have mostly older men, it might not work so well. Whatever you do, do it well, do it for God and do it to the best of your abilities."

A handful of Southern Baptist churches participated in The Bigger Breakfast last year, but this is the first time there's been a coordinated effort to involve Southern Baptists in the event on a large scale.

Southern Baptists looking for help to plan the event can find meeting plans and a speaker outline online at [www.bmen.net/breakfast](http://www.bmen.net/breakfast). Churches also are encouraged to register on the website and report their highlights and attendance after the event. These totals will be added with the British and Nigerian Baptists' numbers to determine if the existing world record has been surpassed.

Burton hopes Southern Baptist churches can use The Bigger Breakfast to ignite their men's ministries.

"We encourage churches not to treat The Bigger Breakfast as just an event," Burton said. "For many churches, The Bigger Breakfast can launch significant men's work in their church as men consider their role in missions. With the Baptist Men's '40-day Prayer Plan for Spiritual Awakening' we're encouraging churches to use following the breakfast, our prayer is that churches will discern God's heart on what He wants to do with men's work in their church."

The 40-day Prayer Plan for Spiritual Awakening can be found at [www.bmen.net/prayer](http://www.bmen.net/prayer). Burton notes that the churches wanting to continue meeting regularly to mobilize their men on mission can use the weekly BMEN Online curriculum, launched in January of this year.



# Principal, athletic director may face jail over prayer

PACE, Fla. (BP) — A court order banning school employees from praying publicly at any time or at any place in a Florida Panhandle school district has resulted in criminal contempt charges against a high school principal and an athletic director.

Principal Frank Lay and athletic director Robert Freeman of Pace High School may face jail time if a federal judge rules they violated a court order issued January 9 that forbids employees from "promoting, advancing, aiding, facilitating, endorsing, or causing religious prayers or devotionals during school sponsored events."

Charges were filed against Lay and Freeman after Lay, who is in his 20th year as the school's principal, asked Freeman to offer a prayer before the meal at a January 29 luncheon in the school's field house honoring boosters and other adults.

Lay is a member of Olive Church in Pensacola.

"I did it primarily out of habit. It's just something we've always done," Lay said. "I have been painted here as somewhat of a rebel. I don't consider myself that, nor do I want to be. I am a Christian. I am not ashamed of my faith."

Orlando-based Liberty Counsel is representing both men. Mathew D. Staver, the organization's founder, told the Florida Baptist Witness that last year the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a lawsuit against the school district claiming some teachers and administrators "endorsed" religion.

The school district, Staver said, complied with the ACLU's recommendations and consented to the entry of an order by the court which, among other things, essentially bans employees from engaging in prayer or religious activities before, during, or after school hours.

U.S. District Judge Case Rodgers initiated criminal contempt proceedings and has referred the men to the United

States attorney's office for prosecution. The case is scheduled for trial in U.S. District Court in Pensacola on September 17.

In protest of the new policy, many Pace High School seniors recited the Lord's Prayer and wore crosses on their caps at their May 30 graduation ceremony. Many in the packed stands joined the students and applauded afterwards.

Meanwhile, Liberty Counsel on Aug. 21 will represent the Christian Educators Association International (CEAI) in a motion to intervene in the original case the ACLU filed against the school district, asking that the consent order approved by the court in March be modified on the grounds it violates the First Amendment rights of CEAI members and requires them to infringe on the free speech and free exercise rights of students and other third parties.

Staver said Liberty Counsel will also seek to become a co-defendant in that case with the school district, and would expect the charges against Lay and Freeman would be set aside.

"If on the other hand, we are not granted intervention, we will file suit directly against the school on behalf of the other teachers," Staver said. "The school cannot enter into an agreement that will violate the constitutional rights of parents and teachers. They simply cannot do something that unconstitutional."

The difference between this ruling and others the court has handed down concerning when and where students or employees may gather for religious activities or pray, is that it does not set standards but instead addresses all employees at all school-related functions, at all times.

It does not allow for club sponsorships, parent and child relationships, or simply someone who wants to "bow their head in respect" when others are praying, Staver said.

"It's a breathtakingly broad ruling," Staver said. "That's

why these individuals and staff have to look over their shoulders. It's on or off campus. It involves not only participating in any religious activity, but giving consent or approval of someone's activity. It absolutely takes a street sweeper to religious expression," Staver said.

In a July 13 e-mail to the Witness, Tim Wyrosdick, district superintendent, said he was confident in the constitutionality of the consent order. Subsequently, the district has not offered legal counsel for Lay or Freeman who continue their responsibilities, Staver said.

"The district is letting the principal and the athletic director flap in the wind. They are cutting them loose because they are intimidated because of the ACLU," Staver speculated. "The district cannot be in collusion with the ACLU... any more than it can agree to segregation" when it comes to the constitutional rights of its employees.

Citing the need to continue to fight for the "fundamental liberties" Americans have, Staver said walking away is not the answer.

"What's not the Christian thing to do is just to walk away whenever the Gospel is at stake — to think it's just irrelevant. These are fundamental liberties that we have: the free exercise of religion and free speech. Those are liberties we cannot take for granted," Staver said. "These liberties are inalienable rights that come from our God."

Ted Traylor, pastor at Olive Church in Pensacola where Lay is a member, said the situation in the Santa Rosa County School District has been one of "fear" for many since the consent order was handed down.

"The Christian teachers I know have fear and uncertainty about what they can or cannot do," Traylor told the Witness. "As the order stands a teacher may not bow his/her head at the lunch table and pray silently over a meal. That is contempt of court. My hope and prayer is that the order can be overturned and a more constitutional document can be formulated."



## Police: clinic used stem cells from aborted babies

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Hungarian police have arrested four people for their alleged involvement in an illegal stem cell clinic located in the former Soviet Bloc country.

The untested treatments utilized stem cells from human embryos and aborted babies, according to Reuters.

Stem cells are the body's master cells that can develop into other cells and tissues, providing hope for producing cures for a variety of diseases. Extracting stem cells from embryos for research results in the destruction of the tiny human beings.

Embryonic stem cells have yet to produce treatments for human beings and have been plagued by the development of tumors in lab animals. Procuring adult stem cells, however, does not harm

donors, and such cells have produced therapies for at least 73 ailments in human beings, according to Do No Harm, a coalition promoting ethics in research.

Induced pluripotent stem cells, which are adult cells reprogrammed to an embryonic-like state, have produced promising results in lab animals. Their extraction does not harm donors.

The market in fetal stems cells and other baby parts is not isolated to other areas of the world. In 2000, ABC News reported on a for-profit Missouri company, Opening Lines, which stationed employees in U.S. abortion clinics to "harvest" organs and tissue from aborted babies for resale on the open market. ([http://www.nrlc.org/Baby\\_Parts/20\\_20\\_Press\\_Release.html](http://www.nrlc.org/Baby_Parts/20_20_Press_Release.html))

## JUST FOR THE RECORD

1. Goodwater Church, Smith County, is hosting Hearts Desire Aug. 30, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken.
2. Leaf River Church, Pineville, will host the Boswell Choir Aug. 30, 6 p.m., with fellowship afterward.
3. First Church, Potts Camp, will have a youth rally Oct. 23, 7 p.m., featuring Jeremy Horn. A love offering will be taken. The church is also hosting a fall festival Oct.

24, 9 a.m., featuring a flea market, arts and crafts, laser tag, music, food, and games.

4. New Bethel Church, Neshoba Association, is hosting the Beth Moore Living Proof women's conference live via satellite Aug. 28 - 29. Tickets, \$20. For more information, visit [www.newbethelsbc.com](http://www.newbethelsbc.com) or call (601) 656-2301.
5. Harrisville Church, Harrisville, will host Gold City in concert Aug.

23, 5:30 p.m. Free admission, but a love offering will be taken. For details, visit [www.harrisvillebaptistchurch.com](http://www.harrisvillebaptistchurch.com) or call (601) 847-1593.

6. Calvary Church, Columbia, will host Terry G. Hall in concert Aug. 29, 6:30 p.m.
7. Mt. Moriah Church, Lincoln County, is having a Senior Adult Day Aug. 23. Worship, 11 a.m., followed by noon meal. Jim Futral, speaker; Danny Moss, pastor.

## REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. Concord Church, Bruce: Revival, Aug. 23 - 26; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Jodie Anderson, speaker; Kim Parker, Gregory, music; Bill Williamson, pastor.
2. Bethel Church, Hazlehurst: Homecoming, Aug. 23; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish; Jerry Glass, speaker; Scott Jones, pastor.
3. Poplar Springs, Mendenhall: 125th anniversary, Sept. 27; anyone having history items of the church is asked to contact (601) 847-2555.
4. Sand Hill Church, Attala Association: Revival, Aug. 23 - 26; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; youth pizza, Tue., 6:30 p.m.; fellowship meal, Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Ed Newman and Danny Lanier, speakers.
5. Calvary Church, Columbia: Revival, Aug. 30 - Sept. 2; Danny Stevens, speaker; Brad Day, music; Millard Moak, pastor.
6. Wheeler Grove, Corinth: Homecoming, Aug. 30, 10 a.m.; Under Grace in concert.



# Justice Dept. — same sex households are just as good

WASHINGTON (BP) — Following weeks of criticism from the homosexual community, the U.S. Justice Department filed a legal brief August 17 arguing that children do not necessarily need a mother and a father and that same-sex households are equivalent to traditional households for child-rearing.

The legal brief, perhaps ironically, was filed in defense of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), although the brief made clear that the Obama administration believes the 1996 law is "discriminatory" and it "supports its repeal."

DOMA, as it is often called, gives states the option of banning same sex marriage and prevents the federal government from recognizing such relationships.

It's the first time the Justice Department has stated the administration's opposition to DOMA, although U.S. President Barack Obama has said as much on several occasions, including doing so again on August 17.

The brief was filed in U.S. District Court in California in reaction to a lawsuit by a California homosexual couple, Arthur Smelt and Christopher Hammer, who contend they are married and are seeking to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act.

The Justice Department filed its first brief in that case in June — a brief that was criticized by the homosexual community because it made, in several instances, conservative arguments regarding DOMA. In its latest brief in the case, the department backs away from some of those arguments and offers a significantly weaker defense.

The Justice Department argues the two men lack standing in the case. "With respect to the merits, this Administration does not support DOMA as a matter of policy, believes that it is discriminatory, and supports its repeal," the brief states.

"Consistent with the rule of law, however, the Department of Justice has long followed the practice of defending federal statutes as long as reasonable arguments can be made in support of their constitutionality, even if the Department disagrees with a particular statute as a policy matter, as it does here."

Obama said during the 2007 presidential campaign that he opposed DOMA, and repeated that stance to homosexual leaders during a June White House ceremony.

"[T]he government does not contend," the department's brief states, "that there are legitimate government interests in creating a legal structure that promotes the raising

of children by both of their biological parents' or that the government's interest in 'responsible procreation' justifies Congress's decision to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman."

As support, the Justice Department cited five professional organizations that "have issued policies opposing restrictions on lesbian and gay parenting because they concluded, based on numerous studies, that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are as likely to be well-adjusted as children raised by heterosexual parents."

"...For these reasons, the United States does not believe that DOMA is rationally related to any legitimate government interests in procreation and child-rearing and is therefore not relying upon any such interests to defend DOMA's constitutionality."

The department's position on procreation and child-rearing has frustrated attorneys with the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), which is an intervenor in the case. ADF has made a defense of the traditional family an essential part of its briefs. For example, in July ADF and allied attorneys filed a brief where it stated, in part, "This inherently procreative nature of marriage is unique to opposite-sex couples, and thus the funda-

mental right to marry is confined to those relationships."

In fact, the Justice Department stated its position on child-rearing in response to ADF's brief and made clear it disagreed with it.

"It is very disappointing that the [Justice Department] has rejected the idea that kids do best in homes with a married mother and father," ADF attorney Brian Raum told Baptist Press. "They've taken the precarious decision of defending DOMA while at the same time claiming that it's bad policy... [I]t is certainly not optimal for the attorney who is defending a particular law to concede that their clients believe it's bad policy. I think that's detrimental to the case."

Raum also disagreed with the Justice Department's contention that "numerous studies" support same-sex parenting. "This is an issue that is the subject of ongoing studies, but there are studies which indicate that kids do best in an environment where they have both their mother and their father," he said.

"...[Same-sex parenting] is a social experience which is in its infancy."

Raum pointed to a 2006 ruling by the State of New York's highest court which said, "Intuition and experience suggest that a child ben-

efits from having before his or her eyes, every day, living models of what both a man and a woman are like."

That same year, the State of Washington's highest court said the state "was entitled to believe that limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples furthers procreation, essential to survival of the human race, and furthers the well-being of children by encouraging families where children are reared in homes headed by the children's biological parents."

By rejecting such arguments, Raum said, the Justice Department has rejected "one of the most significant bases for DOMA and for the marriage laws around the country."

"The state has a legitimate interest in promoting families where kids are raised with both their mom and their dad," he said.

The White House released a statement August 17 from President Obama which said, in part, "While we work with Congress to repeal DOMA, my Administration will continue to examine and implement measures that will help extend rights and benefits to LGBT couples under existing law."

If the Defense of Marriage Act is overturned, then all 50 states could be forced to legalize same sex marriage. The case is titled, *Smelt v. United States of America*.

## First person: Help teens focus on summer camp experience

By Rebecca Ingram Powell  
Correspondent

The tears. The promises. The warm fuzzy feeling around the camp fire.

Souls are saved and hearts are transformed every summer when students get away from it all and spend time focused solely on worship and Bible study — but what happens after those teens return home? Reality hits them hard. Siblings, jobs, and ungodly friends are right where they left them.

As a parent, how do you help your teenager adjust to life after camp? Keep the camp fires burning by encouraging accountability, reminding him of the practical fundamentals of Christian growth, and personally encouraging him to live out life in the valley between those mountaintop highs. Check out these tips:

• **Go global.** When a young person has a salvation experience at camp, a safe way to tell if it was genuine is by whether or not he is motivated to tell his friends. Have your teen make a list of people he wants to tell about his newfound salvation in Christ. This is a time for a testimony.

Encourage your youth to proclaim Christ through e-

mails, phone calls, text messaging, and on their Facebook or MySpace page. Explain that this means many things in his life are going to have to change. Telling people what has happened not only makes him accountable, but it will be instrumental in leading some of those folks to Christ.

• **Build an altar.** Throughout the Old Testament, we see great men of faith erecting altars as reminders of their personal encounters with God. After returning from camp, encourage your teen to record her memories of what happened.

There are several ways a teen can build an altar in the new millennium. Post pictures and comments on a Facebook page. Build a blogsite for pictures and invite others in the group to join and post their own memories of camp. (This would be a great place to share prayer requests, too.)

Purchase the necessary supplies to help create a memory scrapbook of the week. Pick up some smooth white stones at a garden shop and, using paint pens, let your teen build a real altar of stones, decorating each one with Scripture and praises specific to her camp experience.

• **Encourage active ministry.** How will camp make a difference in your teens? It will most often show in their desire to take on active ministry and evangelism efforts. Do your teens know how to share their faith? Capitalize on the "God-high" that camp provides to nudge them out of their comfort zones and into the exciting world of missions. Help them consider their schools and unsaved family members as personal mission fields.

For many teens, camp is a surreal experience, an intense but passing high like any other temporary fix the world offers them. If we really want to help our teens keep that camp fire spirit and make good on the life they really want to live, the most important thing we can do is show them our own surrendered life through the daily disciplines of prayer and Bible study.

These basics are crucial for Christians who want to achieve steady growth toward maturity. As we seek Christ through His

Word and prayer, we let Jesus live His life through us. That is when our teens will see how an authentic Christ-follower lives not only in the "God-highs" of summer camp, but also in the ho-hums of everyday life.

Powell, who lives in a Nashville suburb, is a pastor's wife, mother of three, and author of *Season of Change: Parenting Your Middle Schooler with Passion and Purpose*. Visit her website at [www.rebeccapowell.com](http://www.rebeccapowell.com). Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

## Ag Mission Fellowship to meet on Aug. 22

The Ag Mission Fellowship will meet August 22 beginning at 10 a.m. at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko. Featured speakers are Neshoba County native Tom Kilpatrick and Randy Graves, who grew up in Roxie.

During his career at the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, Kilpatrick worked on projects across Mississippi and served as a liaison to the Mississippi Department of Health. Most recently, Kilpatrick and his wife Martha worked in the Central

American nation of Panama helping the people to learn to grow crops, as fishing for a livelihood is no longer plentiful.

The Kilpatricks are members of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force and have served in that capacity within the southern United States as well as internationally. Graves worked for Entergy over 30 years, and developed an interest in agricultural missions through contact with a number of Southern Baptist missionaries.

In 2006, his involvement in beekeeping led him to join

the Chorti Agricultural Development project in Honduras, where he teaches farmers the fundamentals of beekeeping. Graves and his wife Becky are also members of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force.

Lunch will be served at a nominal cost. For more information, contact Carol Wright in the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board at (601) 292-3334, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: [cwright@mbcb.org](mailto:cwright@mbcb.org).



# THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

P.O. Box 27

Clinton, MS 39060-0027

(601) 922-2242

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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this service. The service is optional, as names of those who wish to be remembered are accepted on an ongoing basis.

JUNE 3 - JUNE 30, 2009

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Mrs. Mae Warren  
Mr. & Mrs. Pat Ingram  
Mrs. Ione Watts  
Mrs. Margaret M. White  
Brother of Ellie Whiddon  
Glenda & Jerry Fry  
Charles William "Bill" White  
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JULY 1 - JULY 26, 2009

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Nell Smith Class, Pleasant Hill B

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Nell Martin  
Mr. & Mrs. Bob Luke  
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Eddie & Delta Speights

## BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Thank you for your financial and in-kind gifts to help prepare our children for the new school year. We are no longer collecting school supplies because school is in full swing and we sent every child to school fully prepared because of you. We will however have new children coming into the ministry throughout the year and we will need to purchase school uniforms, backpacks and other supplies for them. If you would like to give to help this project, you can send a monetary gift either to The Baptist Children's Village, P.O. Box 27, Clinton MS 39060-0027 or online at [www.baptistchildrensvillage.com](http://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com). Please make a note on your gift that it is designated for Back-to-School. We will also be accepting Wal-Mart gift cards for this project. We thank you for your support of Mississippi children!



## Christmas in August

Every Christmas The BCV has residents request storage trunks on their wish lists. These trunks are hard to find during the Christmas holidays, but are plentiful during back-to-school time at Wal-Mart. The trunks are \$40 each. Please contact us if you or your group would purchase a trunk.

Contact Chrystelle Thames at  
[c Thames@baptistchildrensvillage.com](mailto:c Thames@baptistchildrensvillage.com)  
or 601-922-2242.



## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

### Are You Running From God's Will?

Jonah 1:1-3, 17; 3:1-5, 10; 4:5-11

By Lori Clendinning

"Because I said so, that's why!" Is there a parent on the planet who hasn't said (or thought) these words when dealing with obstinate, rebellious, or naughty children?

It's so hard to believe that our precious little babes will ever choose not to follow our desires for them, but the reality is that every sweet-smelling infant will someday stomp their toddler or teenage or middle-age foot and run in the opposite direction. Is there any hope for defiant and disobedient behavior? What can we do when believers' wills and God's will clash?

Here's why I love studying Jonah! In this one little book, there's a directed word, a defiant will, and a definite whallop!

God requested, but Jonah rejected. Then God redirected, Jonah repented and God relented. This is a perfect parenting parallel; the story of a wayward child and a wonderful Dad.

God asked Jonah to relocate to Ninevah, a city that exemplified "human self-exaltation and anti-God power." (Baker Commentary on the Bible) Built by Nimrod, even the Assyrian king declared his city was "evil and characterized by violence." (Baker) Their pleasures included decapitating and then wearing the heads of their enemies, impaling battle survivors and displaying their bodies on stakes, and building pillars of warriors' skulls. Idolatry was rampant as many temples were erected, including ones

to Ishtar, a goddess of war and eroticism.

This was the city in which Jonah was instructed by God to preach repentance. Jonah, for his own reasons, rebelled against God's directive and ran off in the opposite direction to Tarshish, believed to have been a port on the far western end of the Mediterranean Sea.

Likewise, some believers run from specific tasks that God calls them to perform, but many more believers simply refuse to run with God in everyday life. Fortunately for all of us, God does not quickly give up on His people who fail to do His will. God still desires to get things done through us! His will is to accomplish His purposes via His people, in spite of our stubbornness and self-absorption.

Running from God (as Jonah did when he did an about-face to Tarshish instead of Ninevah) is never in our best interest. Following God's plan from the get-go is always the best choice.

We need to be where God wants, geographically as well as spiritually. Jonah could have easily gone to Ninevah but then refused to do God's work there, and that would have been just as disobedient as his running off to Tarshish.

A violent, unexpected storm comes crashing into Jonah's life, and Jonah knows immediately that God is displeased with his career path. God uses the questions of fear-stricken sailors to single out Jonah and to puncture his conscience. By asking Jonah "what do you do?" the sailors compel Jonah to testify that God is the one who controls the land and the sea.

Be fully aware, God will always find a way for us to acknowledge who He is and what place He has in our lives, regardless of whether we are experiencing the best or the worst. In times of peace or at our most turbulent moments, God is God. We would be wise to remember Jonah's testimony and turn from our selfish ways to embrace God's plan for our lives.

When God accepts our repentant apology (as He did with Jonah) and gives us a second chance, we should take it! Don't think that past rebellion disqualifies you from carrying out God's will today. God loves to take our messed up lives and redirect them so that our testimony ends up gaining Him greater victory in the eyes of those who don't yet know him.

Just like Jonah, we ought to take the second (or third or fourth) chances that God graciously gives us, and come at people with all of the truth they can handle: God changes lives!

Better yet, unlike Jonah, let's not stomp our feet and fly away from our Daddy, but rather, let's check our priorities and make sure we are putting His interests above our own selfishness. Let's follow Him and do what He asks of us. His is the best plan, and we would do well to trust and obey!

Because He said so, that's why!

Clendinning is a member of First Baptist Church, Brandon.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Who Is Your Best Friend?

James 4:1-17

By Jim Burnett

Recently I challenged my congregation in a discipline I called "god riddance." During a message delivered from Nahum which portrayed God as a jealous and avenging God, each person was given a card containing five blanks. The directions were simple: identify any pursuit, any idol, any allegiance, any god, etc., that the Lord may view as a rival to Him. Over 200 were identified.

James reminds us in the lesson this week that Christians must be careful not to let their hearts drift and shift away from God via the allure of the world. Conformity to this world brings deformity in the heart of a Christian. It also makes us spiritual adulteresses and adulterers.

**Reject Worldly Behavior**  
(James 4:1-5)

Someone has said that the

biggest obstacle to Christianity is Christians. When unbelievers see believers fussing and fighting, living a double life, or behaving in other ways inconsistent with Christianity, often they get turned off and tuned out to the prospects of coming to Christ.

James audaciously diagnosed the root of the problem that was causing turmoil and chaos among his Christian audience: self-centered wants and wishes morphing into ungodly deeds such as fighting and quarreling. He mandated an immediate halt to such activity and prescribed humility as an antidote.

Unfortunately today, many of our churches have become impotent in bearing spiritual offspring largely due to the disunity and discord that exists between members. Christians

on a pride ride will thwart the movement of God. The Lord will not bless a mess. Therefore it is incumbent on every child of God to shun worldly behavior in ourselves and in our churches. Let us be standard bearers of Christ, not stumbling blocks.

**Draw Near To God**  
(James 4:6-10)

James teaches that God is absolutely drawn to humility like a moth to a light. But He is likewise repulsed at any hint of pride or self-righteousness in the human heart. Anyone who would come to God for help will be helped. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7 NIV). God always responds favorably to the broken-hearted but resists strongly and quickly the stubborn.

Do you live under the Lordship of Christ daily? Do you practice the presence of God? Are you sensitive to per-

sonal sins of commission and omission in your life?

**Recognize God Is Judge**  
(James 4:11-12)

Hardwired into our Adamic nature is the temptation to label, brand, classify, and critique others. In fact, some people think it a gift to summarize the worth or worthlessness of a person in one quick glance. The world calls this perceptiveness, but a better word for it may be judgment.

James reminds us that God is the only one qualified to render a correct assessment of a person, and He will do so at the appropriate time. Therefore, our duty today is not to label but to love. In other words we need to practice loving more and judging less. Jesus warned against being hyper critical of people: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. [2] For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matt. 7:1-2 NIV).

Fight the urge to magnify the physical, mental, and emotional defects and deficiencies of oth-

ers. Accept and appreciate all people, remembering love does cover a multitude of sins.

**Seek God's Will**  
(James 4:13-17)

James reminds believers that our days on earth are numbered, and therefore we should make every moment count for Christ. Consult the Lord with each and every decision you face. If we fail to consult Him, we may insult Him. Christians should turn all cares into prayers: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7 NIV). Our ambitions and goals in life should reflect the cause of Christ. Jesus said, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33 NIV).

Being a friend of God requires that we give the Lord total access to all areas of our lives, not just partial or limited. We live and breathe today to bring God pleasure. Therefore, let us be about building God's kingdom, not our personal castles.

Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mcb.org.

THE BAPTIST  
**Record**



# Analysis: Is there a growing generation gap in SBC?

By Will Hall, executive editor  
Baptist Press

Final in a series

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Much of the talk in Southern Baptist life lately has centered on whether the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is losing its young people and whether the "convention" is driving away young leaders.

Some have asserted that you can't deny the "facts" that the SBC is losing young leaders and even causing them to stay away, but one of the unique aspects of analysis is that data are not facts until they are understood properly within the context which expresses their true meaning.

In order to develop an accurate meaning of a number, it's not enough to look at it in its raw state or to just subject it to a statistical test. It must be examined within the reference environment in order for it to make real sense. Unfortunately, too often conclusions are drawn before the critical questions are asked and answered.

If the SBC is losing its youth, what is the number? Churches lose and gain members, young and old. While every church would like to keep every member, what is a reasonable level of loss? Certainly Jesus taught the principle of the importance of the one (e.g. the good shepherd leaves the 99 for the one), but is this principle of commitment one that He meant to use as a measuring rod for outreach effectiveness? How does the parable of the sower and the soils apply?

For example, if a church attracts and evangelizes 100 youth and 50 of them eventually leave, did the church lose 50% of these young people or gain 50 new members?

Also, if these former youth members/attendees leave, do they ever return? If so, should the church be faulted for the absences of these prodigals or should the church be congratulated for making enough of a lasting impression that the "lost" are "found"?

The same thinking should be applied to the issue of "young leaders" in the SBC. Are we losing young leaders? If so, how many?

The claim is that it's a generational issue, but is there another common denominator among them besides being "young" that might explain their breaking fellowship with Southern Baptists?

Accession and succession of leadership and followership are critical to any organization and this issue deserves serious discussion. These are matters not just vital to the future but to the present as well.

## Losing young people?

Unfortunately, unsubstantiated and undocumented rhetoric seems to dominate any

discussion about young leaders or the younger generations.

Probably one of the most misused statistics over the last several years is "38% of teens attending evangelical churches will forsake their church, if not their faith, by the time they are 18" (Although different variations of this statement are floating around). What is disheartening is that this value-laden assessment is anecdotal information based on personal experiences, not data. In reality the situation is almost the opposite of what is represented in the statement.

In 2007, LifeWay Research reported that "70% of young adults ages 23-30 stopped attending church regularly for at least a year between ages 18-22."

However, while such a figure might cause a loss of breath, the study also showed that the majority of those who dropped out returned later. Among "dropouts" identified in the study, 35% returned to church and now attend twice a month or more, and another 30% returned and attend church, but less regularly than twice a month.

In other words, about two-thirds of those who left for any length of time during the four years after high school, returned during the young adult years — and that number may be even larger.

In the end, the loss of young people amounted to about one-third of 70%, or more precisely, 24.5% of young people who attended church to any degree as youths. (In other words, three-quarters attend church now.) However, the study did not consider those who may have returned after age 30. So, the retention might be higher than 75.5% of all youth!

Perhaps the insight to be gleaned from the study has nothing to do with what churches are doing to prepare their youth. Instead, there might be a basis for investigating the choices individual parents make regarding the environments they allow their children to enter during those college-age years. Such information might help parents intervene with their respective children to help them avoid the apparent spiritual interregnum between high school and college graduations.

One study that might relate was conducted by Gary Railsback to determine the impact of college choice on the faith of self-identified "born-again." He found that the greatest percentage of drop-outs from the born-again category occurred at private secular universities (33-45% dropout rate), public four year colleges (24-32%) and Catholic colleges (51-59%). By contrast, students at the evangelical Christian colleges he studied dropped out at a rate between only six to seven percent. (<http://www.bpnews.net/pdf/BornAgainDropouts.pdf>)

Figure 1, p. 50, Gary Railsback,

"Faith commitment of born-again students at secular and evangelical colleges" in the *Journal of Christian Education*.)

## Losing young leaders?

Probably the most controversial topic of late in Southern Baptist life is whether we are losing "young leaders." Part of the argument that the SBC is losing its young leaders is that fewer are attending the annual meeting.

Some of the data used to make this case were presented by Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research, in a study reported out in 2008. Stetzer's point largely was based on data pertaining to high attendance in 1985, 1986 and 1992 — bellwether years in the two-plus decades effort to restore conservative leadership to the SBC's institutions.

Consequently, it is likely a good deal of the variance in the demographics of those messengers counts can be explained by the politics employed by each side to get out the vote for their respective candidates for SBC president.

On face value it would seem there is such an artificiality to the numbers that they essentially have little value except to help explain the political changes during that time, and little else. Other parts of the variance can be explained simply from the age profile for the whole United States for each of those years.

The point is that there were so many compounding and confounding factors at work in those years that plotting a trend would not produce any result that would be generalizable with any degree of confidence.

However, in the study, Stetzer also makes the point that the 18-39 year old age group for pastors represents 17 percent of all Southern Baptist senior pastors, but at the 2007 annual meeting only composed 13.1% of messengers.

"Oddly enough, in some quarters there has actually been a debate about whether the SBC attendance is aging and losing its young leaders," Stetzer said. "Of course, facts don't convince everyone. My hope is that now, finally, we will stop debating and instead ask the hard question: 'What is causing so many young leaders to stay away?'" ([http://www.bpnews.net/bpnnews.asp?id=27143](http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=27143))

What is the proper context for assessing his three points?

• The reality is there is no debate about whether the SBC is aging. It is, and the biggest

influences can be explained in terms of demographics for all Americans, and geography.

Even with the strides made in ethnic diversity, the SBC remains a predominately White, non-Hispanic population, and Census data shows this is the grayest segment of the U.S. population by a large margin — and getting grayer. It is contributing little to the growth of the U.S. now and by 2030 this segment of American citizens likely will not be adding anything because the actual numbers of White, non-Hispanics will begin to decline.

Aging also is a factor of geography. The South (where the majority of Southern Baptists live) in particular has become much grayer than most of the rest of the U.S.

Prior to 1950, the South was the most youthful region according to Census data. However, since that time, changes in the population have resulted in the South now being older on average than every region of the U.S. except for the Northeast.

• Skipping ahead to his question, "What is causing so many young leaders to stay away [from the annual meeting]?" It's not enough to assert a presumptive cause such as generational disinterest or the strawman that the "convention" is keeping them away.

In San Antonio, the answer simply could have been the expensiveness of hotels, meals, and travel. In 2007, an estimated 5.1 million tourists visited San Antonio's river walk, making it one of the top 14 most visited tourist attractions in the U.S. and driving up demand (and prices) for lodging and food, especially during high travel seasons like the one which coincides with the SBC's annual meeting each year.

Likewise, in 2007, headlines declared "Gas prices: Worse than '81 oil shock." Just prior to the 2007 SBC, \$3.20 per gallon was the ninth straight record high in history at that time (even adjusted for inflation). Younger families with little disposable income would be more impacted by such costs.

• What about his contention that the SBC is "losing its young leaders"?

How many leaders is the SBC losing? Is it significant statistically or even practically? How do such losses compare to other periods in SBC history? For instance, how many young

leaders did the SBC lose during the generational turmoil of the 1960s? Moreover, who are these young leaders the SBC is losing?

Too often, the conversation around this issue is laced with anecdotes of personal knowledge about this young leader or that young leader who has left the SBC out of frustration, but anecdotes typically represent something more than what is factual and often hide something meaningful from view.

Moreover, such assertions are broadly applied to the whole convention, when it is not evident that the situation is even broadly true about the "silo" of relationships which insulate the individual making the claim.

In 2007, LifeWay announced findings from two related studies, one completed by NAMB and another by LifeWay, showing that nearly 30% of recent SBC seminary graduates identified themselves as five-point Calvinists as opposed to 10% of all Southern Baptist pastors.

It's not unreasonable to surmise that there may be some among recent grads who are dissatisfied with the SBC because of the dissonance between their theological makeup and the theological character of available pastoral openings in existing churches.

Do not misunderstand. Calvinism has always been a part of Southern Baptist life and will continue to be. However, something as simple as "supply" (more five-point Calvinist grads) and "demand" (not enough pastors that match a five-point Calvinist persuasion) could account for the attrition of some young leaders.

Likewise, in every generation, multiple networks that "do church" differently than "what has been done before" lure away a certain percentage of seminary graduates to join their movements. It seems this is true today regarding such non-SBC networks as ACTS 29 and the Emerging Church.

At what expense is it worth trying to retain or retain these young leaders in the SBC? More precisely, what is the fix? Do we overhaul the SBC, which is merely the "end user," to adjust to this situation? Or do we correct the "input" and "throughput" elements that are contributing to this output in the accession process?

The bottom line is, as much as Southern Baptists would like to have the loyalties of every young man graduating from our seminaries, some in every generation are bound to leave.

In the end, Southern Baptists need to be wary of quick assessments and sound bite leadership. Instead they need carefully completed research that fully informs and equips them for making critical decisions.



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